

Give us anything but nuclear

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The facts are in -- global warming is real. We can now move the debate to focusing on finding the solutions.

If you read a paper or turn on the television, nuclear power is being presented as the savior to our climate crisis.

This myth originates at the mouths of lobbyists and companies such as General Electric (which owns NBC) within the nuclear industry. It continues to be perpetrated verbatim through the mainstream media with little examination, despite a potential windfall in the billions that would make Exxon Mobil's profits look like pocket change if new reactors are built.

This potential windfall isn't limited to corporations but extends to elected officials such as Utah Rep. Aaron Tilton, R-Springville, who is a partner at Transition Power Development, a company that wants to build a new nuclear power plant in Utah. Interestingly enough, Tilton sits on the public utilities committee which can authorize such a facility. A conflict of interest? Tilton said no.

The gravy train doesn't stop just in Utah, but makes stops across the nation. The nuclear industry is proposing a bill that would call for subsidies of \$25 billion a year -- money that would be much better spent on renewable sources.

Besides old-fashioned money lying behind this nuclear relapse, is there any truth that nuclear power is a green energy? The simple answer is no.

Numerous scholars and studies have estimated that it would take anywhere between 1,500 and 2,000 new reactors to cut our emissions by 20 percent. To put this in perspective, this would mean opening a new reactor every two weeks for the next 60 years starting now. Clearly an impossible feat, as it takes nearly six to 10 years to build one plant at a cost of several billion dollars.

Put another way, renewable energy sources such as wind and solar take between a year or two to add to the power supply. If we rely on nuclear power at a cost of trillions of dollars, we delay actions that we could be making today.

Nuclear waste is the only thing that makes its energy green. Despite being a technology that is almost six decades old and has expanded into 439 plants across 31 countries, not one country or power plant has found a way to deal with nuclear waste. Although spent fuel rods might not sound harmful, the truth is that they remain radioactive for 10,000 years.

Some claim reprocessing is the answer to the waste problem. Looking at France, which is the most successful reprocessor in the world, achieving 28 percent recycling of its waste, we see reprocessing not as an answer but a very small Band-Aid with no real solution in sight. Problems with reprocessing continue to unfold as it can be used to make nuclear bombs.

The uranium boom that these new reactors would require would be a devastating consequence to Utah's environment.

Even today, we are still witnessing the effects of the last uranium boom of the 1950s. Outside of Moab, the now bankrupt Atlas Minerals & Chemicals, Inc. processed uranium along the Colorado River. Today, ammonia and uranium are leaking into the river, which is an important source of water for more than 25 million people as well as home to several protected fish and other species. Clean-up of the site is estimated at nearly \$1 billion dollars and won't be completed until 2028.

Nuclear power isn't the solution to global warming. There is a reason why no new nuclear plants have been built in decades. To solve the climate crisis, we need to look at renewable wind, solar and geothermal sources that can make an impact much more quickly and with less environmental cost.

The Institute for Energy and Environmental Research projects that through a variety of renewable sources and conservation, "complete elimination of CO2 could occur as early as 2040. Elimination of nuclear power could also occur in that time frame."

Such investigations reveal that wind power from just 12 states could supply nearly three times our current energy production. Simply putting solar panels on parking lots and roof tops would nearly reach current production levels.

The reality is that renewable sources are an untapped potential. The reason we have gotten into this global warming mess is because of our unspoken dependence on fossil fuels and not exploring our options. Until we exhaust the possibilities of renewables, let's not present a challenge to our children that is similar to the one our parents gave to us.

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